Multiple Intelligence Readings

Chapter 1: The Foundations of MI Theory

The first chapter of Thomas Armstrong’s book *Multiple Intelligences* really helped cement the learning we received during Dr. Grace’s first class. It had always been obvious, or at least residing in the back of my mind, that in different occasions I shifted learning acquisitions based on what I was studying. I suppose that these are not learning styles, as Armstrong quotes Howard Gardner, who introduced the idea of multiple intelligences: “The concept of style designates a general approach… intelligence is a capacity, that is geared to a specific content in the world” (p. 17). It was surprising to learn that I do not change my reaction to a problem, but my mind subconsciously allows a certain section of my brain to flourish.

We all have this innate knowledge, regardless of how much importance we place on a singular ‘intelligence’. When standardized tests are created, which are truly specific tests to showcase the ability a student can succeed at one specific intelligence, the creators inherently “includes subsets that require linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, and to a lesser extent bodily-kinesthetic intelligence” (p. 13). Ever since the popularity of Binet’s IQ, the world has been obsessed with praising the success on one particular type of intelligence, while ignoring and commonly disproving the credibility of other types of intelligence. However, even in our most professional attempts at weeding out the best of a singular intelligence, as in standardized testing, we include the various subsets. Multiple intelligences are an obvious fact of human existence, showcased since the dawn of man, and this recent transition to recognizing and accepting them is a huge and beneficial step in education.

Chapter 2: MI Theory and Personal Development

It was pleasing to read Thomas Armstrong recognize that intelligence, multiple or not, is not just based on hard work. The idea that with enough hard work, a person can reach great success, really frustrates me. Like Armstrong, I understand that most people require the ability to fine tune and work of equalizing their own personal intelligences, but in many cases, like his example of Mozart, genius “arises through a confluence of biological, personal, and cultural / historical factors” (p. 28). This relates back to my argument regarding standardized testing. Yes, they serve a purpose, but the culture of our education has focused so fully on good test-taking skill and excellent marks and grades, that many students, including myself, were commonly left behind.

Armstrong states that these occasions are called *paralyzing experiences*, and I have personally seen many of my fellow students throughout my education be pushed behind due to their lack of following the accepted path of singular intelligence. Personally, I found myself throughout middle school and much of high school falling behind due to my lack of discussion in class, or the completion of my homework. I was a smart student and I really enjoyed being in school, but the way some of my classes were organized didn’t allow me to grow or simply understand concepts I troubled with, including science and math. On my MI evaluation in class, I didn’t receive one logical/mathematical choice, in either free of forced. However, I excelled in intrapersonal and verbal/linguistic. It’s unfair to many students to inflict a regimented and inflexible classroom, as many of them will be physically unable and without the capacity to develop their intelligence and understand the material and concepts being taught.

Chapter 3: Describing Intelligences in Students

Similar to the first chapter of Professor Theresa Overall’s assigned book *Fires in the Bathroom*, the third chapter in this book dropped another ingenious way to better understand the students who make up my classroom. In *Fires*, it was suggested to allow students some time during the week to accumulate a personal response notebook, which would then allow me as the teacher to look over their strengths and struggles. Thomas Armstrong, in *Multiple Intelligences*, has suggested the teacher also keep a notebook to jot down small details or occurrences that could possibly aid in their understanding and the differentiation of their classroom. There are thousands of small things that students do that hint, or, in some cases scream, towards their specific multiple intelligences. Misbehavior is certainly the latter, and the concept has changed my way of approaching such situations. Before I understood that there are better ways to alleviate such times, but I never really thought that I could personally gain something position from students acting out. The students are acting out for a reason, saying “This is how I learn, teacher, and if you don’t teach me in a way that I most naturally learn, I’m going to do it anyway,” (p. 34) pleading for focus, attention, and a flexible course structure. Reading *Multiple Intelligences*, I realize that while I may become a teacher, I’ll never not be a student, and there is always something to learn from not only scholarly sources, but also even unsavory situations within the classroom. I have to look for every possible source for information, including past assessments and colleagues, and never stop learning.

Chapter 4: Teaching Students about MI Theory

I continue to be amazed by the simple but hidden aspects of teaching a classroom and including students. The idea to provide the students with a metacognitive study by actually teaching them the theories you, as a teacher, are applying, is a huge boon to the classroom. Not only do the students feel they have a say in their education and learn more about multiple intelligences, breaking the circle of single intelligence, but the teacher also gains an insight into the workings of the students’ brains through their own words. Unfortunately, “children go into schools as question marks and leave school as periods” (p. 45), but by allowing them to understand their own various abilities, they’ll hopefully continue to feel confident about their capacities. There are also ways to open the floors for the students to discover their abilities on their own. In *Multiple Intelligences*, they suggest various examples to showcase the different intelligences. I found the most effective was the concept of MI tables: “Set up eight tables in the classroom, each clearly labeled with a sign referring to one of the eight intelligences. On each table, place an activity card indicating what the students are to do.” (p. 50). Armstrong goes on to explain how to regulate the movement of the students, but I feel it might be better and more revealing to allow the students to pick which station they would want to start out at, have them list choices, and respond afterwards in a journal. That way, you gain insight into how enthusiastic any given student is over a subject, but also receive information on how they respond to the other intelligences and gives you the ability to form a rough outline based on visible evidence.

**Russell Warren - Abstract & Synthesis**

Abstract: In the fourth chapter of *Multiple Intelligences*, author Thomas Armstrong

Synthesis:

Chapters 8, 11, 12

With these three chapters, Thomas Armstrong is going deeper into the importance of utilizing multiple intelligence theory in the classroom to address the huge differences that are obvious in a student population. He says that classrooms are “microsocieties with student citizens”, each with their own role to play and desires and interests. Applying MI theory in management cases will keep the class exceptionally smooth. Just as teachers need to develop lesson plans considering the various learning styles students exemplify, they must develop rules and orders with the same things in mind. It will help the students better understand their expectations and be more comfortable in the lesson. However, MI theory is just a context, so not one is good for all. The individual needs to be recognized, which moves us into chapter 11. Each student has their own strengths and weaknesses, and it’s useless and detrimental to the growth of the student and the impact of our lessons if we focus on the latter. This goes the same for disabilities. I, similarly to Armstrong (I suppose), am really irked by that word. Yes, a student may have a deficiency in an area, but that does not mean we need to focus on that loss. Labeling students as disabled is a hugely weighted term, and the students will be pulled down by it. The powerful learning styles the students use should be celebrated and utilized to their benefit, and, as Armstrong says, “MI theory can help teachers identify a student’s strengths, and this information can serve as a basis for deciding what kinds of interventions are most appropriate.” MI theory treats all students, no matter the disability, as learners first, considering their strongest and weakest areas of learning. Utilizing the strengths of the students will boost their self-esteem and engage them in the class, while building their intelligence and learning styles. Finally, in chapter 12, Armstrong continues to talk about working on students’ cognitive skills. Personally, I never really enjoyed philosophy and get very easily confused by the many terms, so I find it particularly daunting to try and teach the students cognitive theory – but I agree it’s very important. MI theory is all about building on the students’ various learning styles, but if we don’t give them opportunities to grow through new learning strategies, they’ll never build and refine their skills. Chapter 8 of UbD also focused on student achievement, while looking at it through a grading scope. Tomlinson urges teachers to not focus on what is right or wrong, a strategy I know too well (and suffer under). In so many situations a student may present extreme effort or enthusiasm but receive a low grade due to wrong information, while another student easily understands the material and spent none of the time the other student did. Teachers need to appreciate both students and not favor either, not matter how easier one is to grade. Another point she brings up is that we don’t *need* to grade at the extent we do. Classrooms should be places where students are trying to understand the material and apply it, not remember it long enough to copy down on a test for a grade. We, as teachers, should want the students to utilize our information in the outside world, so they’re well prepared and ready to look at real-world problems in not such a black and white system, as they’ve been trained to do for years.